

## Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

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FROM NAAS, NEA/IRN

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: SHUM, IR

SLBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN: ATHERTON APPEARANCE

1. FOLLOWING IS DRAFT STATEMENT PREPARED FOR ATHERTON FOR APPEARANCE SEPTEMBER 8. HE HAS NOT YET SEEN THIS MATERIAL SO I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER HE WILL ACCEPT THIS APPROACH. HE HAS ASKED THAT YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW AND WOULD LIKE YOUR COMMENTS BY OPENING OF BUSINESS SEPTEMBER 6.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

MR. CHAIRMAN:

AND MEMBERS OF THIS SUBCOMMITTEE,

I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN. LET ME FIRST EXPRESS MY APPRECIATION TO YOU FOR DELAYING THIS TESTIMONY SO THAT I COULD CONTINUE WITH THE SECRETARY ON HIS  
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RECENT VISIT TO IRAN, PAKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN AND FRANCE

AND TO HAVE SUBSEQUENTLY A FEW WEEKS' VACATION. THERE IS A COMMERCIAL WHICH HAS THE PUNCH LINE "THANKS, I NEEDED THAT" AND I AM APPRECIATIVE OF YOUR UNDERSTANDING.

I REGRET THAT I DID NOT GET COPIES OF THIS OPENING STATEMENT TO YOU AS FAR IN ADVANCE AS YOU WOULD PREFER BUT I ONLY RETURNED TO WASHINGTON A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO TO FINISH GOING OVER THE MATERIAL WHICH I WISH TO PRESENT FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION TODAY. I SHALL BE PLEASED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM YOU TODAY AND, OF COURSE, PROVIDE A FURTHER WRITTEN REPLY WITHIN THE NEXT WEEK IF THIS IS NECESSARY.

THE OBSERVANCE OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD AND THE WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY OF GOVERNMENTS TO CARRY OUT THE AIMS OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CONVENTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ARE OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO ALL OF US. WE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT KNOW THAT THE OBSERVANCE OR VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AFFECTS THE LONG-TERM STABILITY OF VARIOUS COUNTRIES AND, THUS, AFFECTS THE REALIZATION OF U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES.

AS YOU WELL KNOW, MR. CHAIRMAN, THERE ARE WIDE VARIETIES OF SOCIAL AND LEGAL SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, EXTRAORDINARILY DIVERSE CULTURES, AND WIDELY VARYING POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS. EACH COUNTRY IS ENRICHED BY ITS HISTORY AND HERITAGE AND ALSO MUST COPE WITH THE SINS, PASSIONS AND BITTERNESS OF THE PAST. NO INDIVIDUAL LEADER, NO MATTER HOW APPARENTLY POWERFUL IN HIS DOMAIN, CAN ESCAPE HIS HISTORIC LEGACY. IRAN, LIKE TURKEY AND OTHER ANCIENT COUNTRIES OF THE NEAR EAST, FELL ON HARD TIMES IN THE 19TH CENTURY AND SUFFERED WHAT IT REGARDS AS INDIGNITIES AT THE HANDS OF THE WEST. ACCORDINGLY, THEY ARE TODAY EXTRAORDINARILY NATIONALISTIC AND KEENLY SENSITIVE TO THEIR SOVEREIGN RIGHTS AND THEIR DISTINCTIVE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL HERITAGE. WE, THEREFORE, IN CONSIDERING THE DEGREE OF OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN A COUNTRY SUCH AS IRAN MUST ASSESS THE UNIQUE CONDITIONS OF THAT COUNTRY.

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PRESENT DAY IRAN HAS A LEGACY OF AN ANCIENT AND COMPLEX CULTURE AND SOCIAL SYSTEM. IT IS AN EXTRAORDINARILY DIVERSE LAND WITH AT LEAST 3 OR 4 MAJOR ETHNIC AND LINGUISTIC GROUPS AND WIDE VARIATIONS WITHIN THE POPULATION IN OUTLOOK, ASPIRATIONS, EXPECTATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL LEVELS. IT IS NOT AN EXAGGERATION TO STATE THAT FOR THE LAST 40-50 YEARS, IRANIAN LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DIFFICULT AND DEMANDING TASK OF CREATING AND BUILDING A MODERN NATIONAL

STATE ON THE FOUNDATION OF A TRADITIONAL AND, IN MANY WAYS, FEUDAL CIVILIZATION. THE TASK OF MODERNIZING A TRADITIONAL LAND AND PEOPLE WITH VERY LIMITED FINANCIAL RESOURCES--

THAT IS, UNTIL RECENTLY--AND A NARROW SKILLED MANPOWER BASE, IS AS GREAT IN IRAN AS IT HAS BEEN ELSEWHERE. THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERE SOCIAL SHOCKS TO THE SYSTEM AND DISRUPTION IN THE TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE. THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN IN THE LAST FEW DECADES HAS MADE GREAT PROGRESS IN THIS PROCESS BUT HAS A LONG WAY YET TO TRAVEL.

IN THE CRITICISMS DIRECTED AT THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN FOR ITS ALLEGED ABUSES IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD, VERY LITTLE, IF ANY, ATTENTION IS GIVEN TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL RIGHTS. I HOPE MY COMMENTS HERE WILL PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION IN THAT COUNTRY. THESE FEW COMMENTS WILL ALSO, I BELIEVE, PRESENT A CONTEXT FOR MY ANSWERS TO THE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS YOU SUBMITTED.

THERE ARE UNQUESTIONABLY PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES IN IRAN'S JUDICIAL, PENAL, POLITICAL AND INFORMATIONAL SYSTEMS WHICH VARY CONSIDERABLY FROM OUR OWN. IRAN'S LEGAL SYSTEM, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS FOR ABOUT 75 YEARS BEEN BASED ON THE NAPOLEONI

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